



**For the past several months, a number of refuse collection customers have experienced issues with their trash pickup. The following is an update from the City of Lynchburg's Director of Public Works, Gaynelle Hart about the issues of trash collection and how the department intends to address these issues.**



***Can you outline for us exactly what the issues are that are hampering trash collection in Lynchburg?***

There are several problems that have made it difficult for us to deliver the level of service our citizens deserve. I don't offer them as excuses but explanations, and we want citizens to know we are working to make things better.

First, despite our recruitment efforts, we are understaffed. We continuously work with the City's Human Resources Department and local temp agencies to hire both drivers and trash collectors (crew members who work on the back of the trash trucks), but it is difficult to find individuals who want and are able to do this type of work. In addition, we are utilizing Public Works staff from other work groups to fill in for staffing shortages.

Second, we have experienced equipment and maintenance issues. In the past, we were not able to have a backup truck in the fleet which is not a sustainable situation. The fleet was already short, so when trucks broke down, it meant that refuse collection would be behind for that day. When funding became available through the CARES Act, we made the decision to request the necessary funding to purchase two new trucks. The funding was approved, and the trucks ordered. However, it takes time to receive the trucks and we are waiting for delivery now.

Third, in order to improve efficiencies, the decision was made to change over our semi-automated trucks to fully automated. Currently, the semi-automated trucks require workers to roll the trash carts onto the arms to be lifted up to the trucks and emptied. Once all trucks are fully automated, the new arms will lift the carts, empty them and return them to the curb.

Unfortunately, we found that this process takes a truck out of service for 30-45 days while the upgrade is being performed at the vendor. In the long term, having automated trash trucks should improve efficiencies; however, until Public Works receives possession of its new trucks and can get back to an acceptable level of customer service, the decision has been made to not send any other trucks to the vendor to be upgraded.

***What other steps are you taking to improve service?***

Until we can take delivery of the new trucks we have purchased, we are leasing a trash truck. We hope that having this truck will take some of the pressure off of the fleet, and we will be able to improve our service.

We are doing our best to pick up customers' trash on the scheduled days, but it may not be until later that evening. If we don't pick up your trash within the regular time frame, leave your cart at the curb, and our crews will do their best to get it on the next day.

***What are the ways you let people know when you can't pick up their trash?***

We encourage people to follow the City's Facebook page or they can call 856-2489. We are looking at other possibilities like using Lynchburg Alerts to let people know as well. For now, Facebook is the best avenue to use.

***Lastly, some customers have questioned whether or not there is a connection between the new \$10 billing for trash on water utility bills and the current issues with trash collection. Can you clarify this?***

We understand some people may think this; however, there's absolutely no connection. The changes in billing were an effort to begin recouping the actual cost of providing solid waste services that includes trash, brush and bulk, recycling and other services and to ensure that all users pay for these services. We have changed the brush and bulk process as we have communicated. We have not changed the residential trash collection process.